

2009 Survey of Lutheran Pastors in Wisconsin

Fred Berger
and
Brett Krause

Church History 3031
8 December 2009

Contents

Introduction

I. Purpose and Methodology

II. The Data Collected

A. 2009 Survey

B. 1971 Survey

III. Comments

IV. Interviews

V. Conclusions

Appendix 1 – Cover Letter

Appendix 2 – Interview Documents

Appendix 3 – Acknowledgements

Introduction

In 1971, Dr. Lawrence Kersten conducted a survey of Lutheran lay people and Lutheran parish pastors in a three-county area of metropolitan Detroit. His research included four branches of Lutheranism - the American Lutheran Church (ALC), the Lutheran Church in America (LCA), the Lutheran Church – Missouri Synod (LC-MS), and the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod (WELS). His objectives were twofold. His first objective was to determine the impact of religion on the attitudes and values of Lutherans in this area. His second objective aimed to investigate the impact of the secularized urban culture of twentieth century America on traditional Lutheran beliefs, attitudes, and behavior.¹

Dr. Kersten's research was quite extensive. It included interviews of Lutheran laymen, a survey of Lutheran clergymen, and a survey of Eastern Michigan college students. The interviews of Lutheran laymen consisted of 213 questions and lasted one to three hours. The survey of Lutheran clergymen and college students incorporated roughly the same amount of questions as the laymen interviews.

His large amount of research produced numerous categories of data. In fact, when Kersten published his research in *The Lutheran Ethic*, he compiled this data into over 160 tables. These tables discuss a vast array of findings ranging from the religious commitment of Lutherans to the impact politics, morality, and civil liberties have on religion.

It is important to note that the survey in this paper is a close reproduction of just two of the tables in Dr. Kersten's findings. These two tables dealt specifically with Lutheran clergymen's responses to six fundamental truths of Scripture. His findings portrayed a wide

¹ Lawrence K. Kersten, *The Lutheran Ethic* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1971), 16.

spectrum of beliefs among the pastors of the four church bodies surveyed. His results have been combined into one table (see Table 2-4 in Part II).²

This table became a topic of interest to us because of its inclusion in the Bible Information Course, *Growing in Hope*. The course used this table to show prospective members how a small amount of false doctrine can work its way through an entire church body to the point where even fundamental teachings are compromised. Kersten's results showed this compromise in biblical truth to be found in the LC-MS, ALC, and LCA. On the contrary, pastors in the WELS did not show these same compromises.

The survey we conducted intended to see if Dr. Kersten's results from 1971 would be consistent with results gathered nearly forty years later with a larger sampling size. These results are found in Part II of this paper. Part I will first outline the purpose and methodology of our survey.

Part I - Purpose and Methodology

The results of Dr. Kersten's 1971 survey have long been a useful and informative tool for discussions pertaining to the differences between the major Lutheran church denominations in America. His results clearly showed that clergymen in the LCA, the ALC, and the LC-MS held different beliefs than other pastors within their very own synods, even regarding fundamental teachings of the Bible. On the other hand, Dr. Kersten's survey showed that clergymen in the WELS displayed a perfectly consistent belief in the truth of these fundamental doctrines.

As we familiarized ourselves with Dr. Kersten's work, it became quickly apparent that his survey had two evident limitations regarding what his results mean for present day Lutherans

² From this point on when we talk about Dr. Kersten's survey, we are referring to this small portion of it.

in America. The first is that his findings are nearly 40 years old. The second is that his findings are limited to a three county area of metropolitan Detroit. Thus, two questions naturally arose when evaluating Dr. Kersten's results: Do his results still accurately reflect the beliefs of Lutheran clergymen in 2009? Also, do the results found in the Detroit area accurately reflect trends among Lutheran clergymen in other areas of the country? In light of these questions, we conducted this survey of our own.

The initial intention of our survey was to counter both of these limitations by conducting a survey of present day Lutheran clergymen in a much wider scope of American Lutheranism. In fact, our intention was to send our survey to every Lutheran pastor in America from the five Lutheran Church bodies most familiar to us: the ELCA,³ the LC-MS, the WELS, the Evangelical Lutheran Synod (ELS), and the Church of the Lutheran Confession (CLC). This initial goal seemed plausible because of the modern technology we had available to us, technology that was not available to Dr. Kersten. Dr. Kersten could only distribute hard copies of his surveys through postal mail. He had to factor in printing and postage costs, the lag-time between dispatch of a letter and its receipt, and all of the other frustrations and limitations that postal mail presented. We, however, had the luxury of email as well as an online survey software tool called *Zoomerang*. Therefore, if we would be able to obtain distribution lists containing the email addresses for every pastor in America from the five aforementioned Lutheran synods, we felt we could successfully launch our survey nationwide with no cost and with relative ease.

However, it soon became apparent that even with the luxury of email, our scope would need to be narrowed. While we had access to nationwide email distribution lists for the WELS and ELS through the Mission Advancement Office at Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary (WLS), we

³ Dr. Kersten's survey included the LCA and ALC. In 1988, the LCA and ALC joined with the Association of Evangelical Lutheran Churches (AELC) to form the ELCA.

were not able to obtain such lists from the ELCA, LC-MS, or CLC.⁴ The only way to obtain the email addresses for the pastors in these synods was to copy them individually from each synod's yearbook.

Certainly, this was not a feasible option for a nationwide survey, so we decided to limit the scope of our survey only to Lutheran pastors in the state of Wisconsin. We were able to obtain email addresses for the LC-MS pastors from their online synod directory,⁵ and we were able to obtain the email addresses for the ELCA⁶ and CLC pastors from a paperback copy of their synod yearbooks. All of these email addresses were entered into Microsoft Excel spreadsheets and then uploaded as distribution lists into *Zoomerang*. When these three distribution lists were added to the distribution lists for WELS and ELS pastors we had all of the logistical factors in place to launch our survey to all of the Lutheran pastors in Wisconsin. It wasn't the nationwide survey we had initially envisioned, but it did widen the scope of Dr. Kersten's 1971 survey.

The next step was to formulate the questions we would include in the survey. Our goal was to use similar questions to those Dr. Kersten used in 1971, editing them for the sake of clarity and in an attempt to avoid as many misunderstandings as possible. Table 1-1 below is a comparison of Dr. Kersten's questions to ours.

⁴ The LC-MS charges \$500 for a synod wide distribution list. The ELCA does not give out distribution lists at all.

⁵ http://www.lcms.org/ca/www/locators/nworkers/w_summary.asp.

⁶ Email addresses in the ELCA yearbook were not for specific pastors but for the church they served. So, if there were ELCA parishes with multiple pastors, only one of them would be able to respond to the survey.

Table 1-1
Comparing 1971 and 2009 Survey Questions

1971 Survey	2009 Survey
1. The Bible is God's Word and all it says is true.	1. The Bible is God's verbally inspired Word and it contains no errors. ⁷
2. The Bible contains some human error.	2. The account of Adam and Eve falling into sinfulness is historically accurate. ⁸
3. The account of Adam and Eve falling into sinfulness is simply a story which did not take place in reality.	3. A child is sinful at conception. ⁹
4. A child is sinful at birth.	4. Only those who believe in Jesus as their Savior will go to heaven. ¹⁰
5. Only those who believe in Jesus as their Savior can go to heaven.	5. The resurrection of Jesus Christ was a bodily, physical resurrection. ¹¹

After our questions were formulated, we simply inserted them into their proper place on the *Zoomerang* software along with a cover letter that would appear in the recipient's email Inbox,¹² and our survey was ready to be launched. On Tuesday, October 27th, we launched five identical surveys, one to each of the five Lutheran synods we were surveying.¹³ The surveys

⁷ We felt Dr. Kersten's first two statements could easily be combined into one. We added the phrase "verbally inspired" in order to more clearly define what we meant by God's Word.

⁸ Dr. Kersten's third statement was a Biblically *false* statement. To avoid confusion, we made sure that all statements were Biblical *truths*.

⁹ Dr. Kersten's fourth statement left room for a child in the womb to be considered innocent of sin. Our statement took away this opportunity for confusion.

¹⁰ We changed the word "can" in Dr. Kersten's fifth statement to "will." Dr. Kersten's original wording could have left room for the interpretation that there is a possibility for those who believe in Jesus as their Savior to not go to heaven. We felt the word "will" strengthened the statement.

¹¹ We added statement five because the bodily, physical resurrection of Jesus Christ has been a recent topic of debate.

¹² The goal of the cover letter was to make our survey as inviting as possible for the recipient. It was short and concise. We made it clear that the survey instructions were easy to follow, that it would take less than one minute to fill out, and that the results would be anonymous. Finally, we made sure that the link to the survey was in the email so that only one mouse click was necessary to access it. See Appendix 1 for a copy of the cover letter.

¹³ The surveys needed to be launched separately so that we would know which synod the participating pastor was affiliated with.

remained open for completion until Tuesday, November 10th. It was then that we compiled the results.

Part II - The Data Collected

After closing the survey, we used the data *Zoomerang* compiled to calculate the results. Part II records the data produced in the results of this survey. It also compares the data produced in our survey with the data produced in Dr. Kersten's survey.

Overall, 41.8 percent of 1,710 Lutheran pastors in Wisconsin to whom we sent our survey responded by submitting partially or fully completed surveys. Table 2-1 below displays specific numbers for each church body. The number of surveys sent simply indicates how many surveys were sent to the email addresses we collected for the pastors in the particular church body. The number of *Zoomerang* visits shows how many pastors clicked on the email link that took them to the *Zoomerang* website. At that point, the pastor could exit the survey before completing any of the questions, or the pastor could partially or completely answer the questions of the survey.

TABLE 2-1
Data Concerning Surveys Sent and Completed, 2009

	ELCA	LC-MS	WELS	ELS	CLC
Surveys sent	574	510	596	25	5
Zoomerang visits	130	247	352	11	3
Partials	41	7	5	1	0
Completes	83	226	339	10	3
Response Percentage	21.6%	45.7%	57.7%	44.0%	60.0%

Table 2-2 contains the data collected from both partially and fully completed surveys. The number after each statement represents the percent of pastors who agreed with the statement. We rounded to the nearest tenth of a percent for better accuracy.¹⁴

TABLE 2-2
Clergy Religious Beliefs, By Branch of Lutheranism, 2009

	ELCA	LC-MS	WELS	ELS	CLC
1. The Bible is God's verbally inspired Word and it contains no errors.	40.5%	97.8%	100%	100%	100%
2. The account of Adam and Eve falling into sinfulness is historically accurate.	36.8%	98.2%	100%	100%	100%
3. A child is sinful at conception.	87.5%	100%	100%	100%	100%
4. Only those who believe in Jesus as their Savior will go to heaven.	60.0%	99.6%	100%	100%	100%
5. The resurrection of Jesus Christ was a bodily, physical resurrection.	96.2%	100%	100%	100%	100%

In the compilation of Dr. Kersten's results, he does not record how many pastors were included in his mailing. He does, however, include how many partially or fully completed surveys he received from the pastors in each church body.¹⁵ Table 2-3 displays this information below.

TABLE 2-3
Data Concerning Surveys Returned, 1971

	LCA	ALC	LC-MS	WELS
Surveys Returned to Kersten partially or fully completed	50	52	112	16

¹⁴ For example, if rounded to the nearest percent, it would appear in question five that 100% of the LC-MS pastors agreed. In fact, one responder out of the 226 disagreed with that statement making the percentage 99.6.

¹⁵ Kersten, *The Lutheran Ethic*, 37.

Table 2-4 contains the data collected from both partially and fully completed surveys from Dr. Kersten's findings.¹⁶ As with the 2009 survey, the number after each statement represents the percent of pastors who agreed with the statement.

TABLE 2-4
Clergy Religious Beliefs, By Branch of Lutheranism, 1971

	LCA	ALC	LC-MS	WELS
The Bible is God's Word and all it says is true.	10%	19%	74%	100%
The Bible contains some human error.	76%	74%	18%	0%
The account of Adam and Eve falling into sinfulness is simply a story which did not take place in reality.	83%	72%	20%	0%
A child is sinful at birth.	67%	74%	96%	100%
Only those who believe in Jesus as their Savior can go to heaven.	43%	52%	84%	100%

As we compare the tables compiled from our survey to those compiled from Dr. Kersten's survey, some interesting facts and trends present themselves. Our survey, conducted with a larger population sample, received 485 more partially or fully completed surveys than Dr. Kersten's. In general, the trend of Lutheranism from Kersten's survey to ours appears to have become more conservative, although many factors might have entered into the data displaying this shift. Especially noteworthy is the apparent increase of the LC-MS pastors moving towards orthodoxy. The WELS showed full congruency in both surveys. More comments of a speculative nature are discussed in Parts III – V.

¹⁶ Kersten, *The Lutheran Ethic*, 34-36.

Part III – Comments

The goal of our project was not only to collect data, but also to get feedback on our survey. One of the ways we accomplished this was by including a comment box at the end of our online survey. Comments were welcomed, but they were not mandatory for completion of the survey. This comment box allowed the participants to voice comments and concerns about the survey in general or expound on their answers to the specific questions. This also enabled us to receive immediate feedback on the results.

Of the 715 partially or fully completed surveys returned to us, 191 pastors submitted comments. The responses we received were quite interesting, and the content covered a wide range of material. What follows is a sampling of those comments in order to give the reader a feel for the kinds of remarks we received from the pastors of each church body.

ELCA

32 pastors from the ELCA responded with comments. A number of the responses dealt with the survey in general:

- This survey is very narrow and weighted. The questions seem to have the assumption that faith rests on the historical accuracy of a biblical account, thereby making faith synonymous with historical verification. Faith is far greater than history.
- This survey proves that WELS still has theologically conservative students.
- Form criticism and historical criticism is lacking boldly in this survey.
- There should, most times, be an “I don’t know” option for some of these questions. How should I, even as a pastor, presume to know God’s mind?

- These are pretty theologically loaded questions! I'm too engaged in evangelism to deal with this stuff.
- This survey contains a bit less nuance than the confessions would perhaps encourage.
- Some of your questions would have received a response if there had been some qualifications given. From my point of view, there was little context for me to give what I felt was an appropriate answer. Sorry about that. In those cases, while I did have responses, I felt that they would not be properly understood without my answers having additional qualifications.
- Your questions are way too narrow in their focus. They shouldn't be "yes" or "no" because I don't agree or disagree FULLY with any of them!

Most of the comments dealt with pastors explaining their answers to specific questions.

Question #1 spurred the most comments. It stated, "The Bible is God's verbally inspired Word and it contains no errors." Here is a sampling of the responses to this question:

- I cannot answer this questions with a "yes" or "no" without knowing which version of the Bible is being referred to – the Hebrew? the Greek? the Latin? One particular translation into English? Since there is not a specific book that is referred to as "The Bible," I cannot agree with the statement.
- The question about inerrancy is too simplistic. Yes, these words are inspired because the Word Jesus Christ is in them all, and the gospel is the queen of all its teachings. Without error, Scripture brings us to Christ for our life and salvation. We do not need to say it is without scientific or geographic limitations, operating with the then known knowledge of the human authors of whatever era. You can also say that the original manuscripts are

verbally inspired, but we don't have those anymore, and we know the copies can be different from each other.

- The Bible is a Holy Inspired Word of God, but due to human editorial work, there can be errors or personal opinions.
- The Bible IS the inspired Word of God, but it can be in error. We worship Christ, not the Bible. The Bible is the cradle wherein Christ is laid. Furthermore, the true Word of God is Christ himself. All of Scripture must then be looked at from the lens of Christ. Do not be misinformed that because I feel the Bible can be in error that I don't believe in the Word of God. I do.
- The Bible is God's inspired Word and the Word has no errors with regard to the Spirit, but it does have error as the humanly written word.
- The Bible is the inspired word of God. This does not mean, however, that we are to interpret the Bible without considering its historical context with regard to word usage, practices, and the reality that the text itself has undergone editing and re-editing by various editors such as priests, Yahwists, Elohist, and those who are called Deuteronomists.
- An error free Bible? Given the differences between accounts in Kings and Chronicles of the same events? Given that Jesus goes to the Passover once in the synoptic gospels and twice in John? The facts are not as important as the story itself. If you have to have the fact and data – it ain't faith. The Bible is all true. Most of it actually happened, and what isn't factually true should be.

The second question prompted many comments concerning specific terminology we used. We phrased question #2, “The account of Adam and Eve falling into sinfulness is historically accurate.” Here are a few ELCA responses to this question:

- The term “historically” in the Adam and Eve question should be explained better.
- I cannot agree with the statement about Adam and Eve. Does “historically accurate” mean just the facts? And if so, from whose perspective? History is always told from the perspective of the “winners”...in this case, who won?
- I believe that the story of Adam and Eve falling into sin is historically true in that it happens all the time. It is our story. Do I believe that the story in Genesis is meant to be history like history in a history book? No.
- The story about Adam and Eve is not about history. It is about the presence of evil and God and us.

Questions 3, 4, and 5 prompted very few comments:

- The question about a child being sinful at birth is interesting. A child at birth is sinful because that child is born into sin and carries the sin of the Old Adam. Whether a child at birth actually commits sin is a question only God can answer. As Lutherans, we believe that the sin of the Old Adam is cleansed in baptism. (Question 3)
- Regarding matters of eternal judgment...that is completely in God’s hands. (Question 4)
- I disagreed with the question about heaven because I think you need to leave some things to God’s judgment even if you think you know the way to heaven based on Scripture. We know that people who trust in Christ are saved. That is why we witness. But we

don't know if God has ways to bring people to Christ beyond our life on earth, so at least we should be humble. (Question 4)

Many of the pastors in the ELCA commented on the terms used in these questions in general, without focusing on a specific question or a specific term. Not knowing exactly what concept our terms were trying to define made some of the questions difficult for them to answer:

- It is difficult to answer these sorts of questions without definitions of theological terms, which are subject to varying interpretations.
- The Bible does not use some of this terminology...so why should we use it?
- Some of this verbage is vague and the words need further defining.

A few of the pastors used the comment box to give a brief clarification of their beliefs:

- I believe the Bible is the inspired Word of God given for the salvation of the world through Jesus Christ. God's goodness and grace exceeds our paltry understanding.
- I believe that God's Word is inspired and is the norm for life and faith. I believe that cultural understandings and perspectives have changed over the centuries, that human endeavors necessitate using the latest scholarly tools, with the perspective of a vibrant faith, to make the Word of God relevant and applicable to each new generation.

LC-MS

The pastors in the LC-MS responded with 85 comments, more than any other church body. The majority of these comments were encouraging and the pastors seemed to appreciate the

opportunity to be involved in the survey. A large number of the responders asked for the results of the survey. We have listed a sampling of the comments regarding the survey in general:

- That's a pretty black and white survey, but so is the Christian faith.
- Those were basic and absolutely necessary to be called Christian! Also to be called Lutheran!
- It is sad that such a survey must be taken. Every answer to these questions should be standard for every pastor. If anyone answers "no," he should not be a pastor.
- I like the questions. Any reason for them? I hope and pray they won't be used to bash people, but as a tool for seeing where our churches are. Thank you for conducting this survey.
- As far as Scripture tells us, these questions are correct. Nothing further can be read into your questions. I feel, though, that the questions could have been written a little more clearly. I know the Bible has little scribal errors, but nothing that changes doctrine. The first question simply said "no errors." I almost stopped taking the survey at this point.
- I missed any reference to Jesus Christ being the purpose and center of the Scriptures. The analogy of faith is centered in the justifying declaration of God for the sake of Jesus. This is also missing.
- This is a rather simplistic survey. I'm not sure exactly what you are trying to prove with it, but I think questions with more depth would have been helpful.
- You have formulated your questions into a strict black and white format. Most of your questions are open to more discussion than a simple "yes" or "no." This might result in skewed conclusions.

- These are good questions, but it would have been nice to have a third option for clarification or explication.
- The survey contains the fundamentalist questions. Now, what about the Sacraments?
- It's sad that these types of questions must be asked of Lutherans. Blessings on your work!

The survey questions prompted a good number of LC-MS pastors to comment on the inter-church relations or thoughts about other church bodies:

- I hope this helps you to understand that we in the LC-MS are Orthodox Confessional Lutherans. My mom's side of the family is WELS and I sometimes get the feeling that they think we are ELCA. Come on, at least you can pray with me. If that is an exaggeration, please forgive me.
- If a church refuses to accept God's Word as inerrant and Jesus in his entirety, it should not be called "Christian," and certainly not use the name "Lutheran." I pray for the members of the ELCA who struggle with what their synod has done and hope they will make the right decision to leave.
- ELCA is not a Lutheran Church. Why did you include them in such a survey?
- I would be surprised that any Lutheran pastor from all but the ELCA would answer anything but "yes" to all the questions.
- Have you looked into the free and independent Lutheran churches?
- I am an LC-MS pastor right now, but I was educated at WLS and served in the WELS for 18 years. I am finding in the LC-MS more patience for the Holy Spirit to work saving faith in the redeemed.

Unlike the ELCA pastors, the LC-MS pastors had fewer comments about specific questions and terminology. In fact, only questions 2 and 4 were even mentioned in all of the comments.

Below is a listing of all the remarks about these questions:

- Just answering “yes” or “no” to the question about Adam and Eve does not leave room for further comments. I believe that mankind fell into sin when tempted by Satan. I believe God created everything. How it all happened, I don’t know. The creation and fall accounts were written by Hebrews who weren’t interested in how things happened, only that it happened. The writer(s) of the creation and fall were not writing historical accounts like the four evangelists. The creation and fall accounts are poetry that tell the truth that God made everything (not evolution), mankind fell into sin, and therefore, I am a sinner. (Question 2)
- The phrase “go to heaven” is not very useful because it doesn’t exactly show up in Scripture. I’m writing this because only those who believe in the Lord Jesus Christ will be *saved* and I didn’t like how that question was worded. (Question 4)
- On question 4, it is useful to remember that we only know that those who believe in Christ will go to heaven and so that is all we teach, but judgment is ultimately the Lord’s.
- I think that only people who believe in Jesus go to heaven, but I’ll reserve the final verdict to One who knows more than me. The discussion of unbaptized babies comes to mind. (Question 4)
- Whom God saves or brings to heaven seems to me to be up to God. (Question 4)
- I have a problem with aborted babies. Do they go to hell? (Question 4)

Whether in a positive or negative light, the pastors in the LC-MS tended to want to predict the results we might find with this survey. This might stem from a willingness to acknowledge doctrinal inconsistencies among the pastors of their church body and other church bodies. Some hope for consistent answers, but fear the worst:

- While many might answer as I did, their parish practice may be a total departure from this Scriptural faith. Those whose worship is contemporary have drifted from a true biblical basis to a man centered form of worship that results in a denial of the Scriptures.
- What is scary to me is the answers that I think you're going to get from a number of other ordained clergy out there.
- I pray that this survey finds it better than I fear it is out there in the world of Lutheranism when it comes to the inerrancy and infallibility of the Scriptures.
- Thank you for your project. I'm sure it will prove of interest and, hopefully, reflect the biblical truths which we, as orthodox Lutherans, believe, teach, and confess.
- I'm guessing that you might be surprised at some of the answers!
- I am afraid that too many "Lutherans," even pastors, would not agree with the questions you asked. We are not believing God's Holy Word, but rather listening to the precepts of men.
- I hope that all the other LC-MS pastors surveyed would answer as I did.

As with the ELCA, some of the LC-MS pastors used the comment box to state a brief clarification or confession of their faith. A sampling of these kinds of comments are listed:

- I am an LC-MS pastor who believes and teaches that the Bible is the Word of God, the Holy Spirit's gift of faith is the only way to heaven, we are born sinful, and human life is a precious gift from God.
- The gospel of our salvation is two things. Jesus died to forgive us and rose to give us eternal life in heaven. This message is in every one of my sermons, prayers, and Bible classes.
- God humbly reveals himself in a manner we can comprehend and a mighty God humbles himself to communicate in our human language. I am too simple to contradict the facts of Scripture and too poor to ignore the grace they convey.

WELS

72 pastors in the WELS responded with comments. As the survey was sent from WLS students, the strong majority of the comments were encouragement in our studies for the public ministry and appreciation for the truth that the questions of the survey conveyed. The general comments about the survey were quite positive, although some wondered about the simplicity of the questions. A sampling of these general comments follows:

- These should be easy questions for any Christian to answer.
- These questions are o.k., but they are not far from the Five Fundamentals.
- The survey seems rather simplistic.
- This is a good survey. I will be interested in hearing the results.

Unlike any of the comments from the ELCA or LC-MS, the pastors in the WELS seemed very familiar with similar surveys conducted in the past. A number of the pastors commented on their familiarity:

- It seems to me like you got those questions from *What's Going on among the Lutherans* by J. Kincaid Smith.
- Your questionnaire sounds very similar to that of Dr. Lawrence Kersten in his book, *The Lutheran Ethic*, done some thirty years ago. His research sampled the beliefs of Lutheran laity and clergy in the then LCA, ALC, Missouri and Wisconsin Lutheran church bodies. I would be interested in what you find out for today, whether the comparisons are any better or worse!
- This should be interesting when you are done. I wonder if the results will be similar to the results compiled sometime in the 1970's.
- This seems like a 40 year old Herman Otten survey right out of the stacks.
- These questions remind me of a phone interview I once had with a female ELCA pastor who admitted that there were pastors in her synod who didn't believe in Jesus' bodily resurrection, but she said, "Every church body has its differences in opinion."
- This looks very much like the survey conducted in the Detroit area in the 1970's.

The pastors in the WELS showed great confidence in the responses of their fellow pastors. They showed no hesitancy in believing that all pastors in the WELS would answer these questions in the same way. The bulk of the pastors who commented asked for the results of this survey for their own teaching purposes, to better show their prospects and members the trends of the different Lutheran denominations. A few of the responses are listed below:

- I'm convinced that every WELS pastor who replies will answer as I did. God has truly blessed our Synod by keeping it firmly founded on his Holy Word.
- There is only one true faith – the one based on God's inspired truth as revealed by the Holy Spirit through His writers. No other revelation is necessary because God's truths are timeless. They alone will lead us to see our Savior in heaven. Any pastor who does not believe the statements in this survey will lead God's people astray. Thank God our Synod has a Seminary with professors who teach God's truth, not man-made, spiritual fiction! May every WELS pastor continue to be united and centered on the gospel truth to remain orthodox in a heathen world and share God's truth to lead others to Jesus!
- I am using "Growing in Hope" for my Bible Information Class. I've always been fascinated by that survey of Lutheran pastors at the end of lesson 10. This sounds like those exact questions. I'm assuming you are able to see where the trends is going. I'd be very interested in seeing your results as I continue to share those stats. Thanks, and God bless your project!

ELS and CLC

Due to the comparatively small number of survey responses, the pastors from these two church bodies did not offer any comments that pertained to the content of our survey.

Conclusion

Numbers do not always tell the entire story. Therefore, these comments prove to be a very beneficial source of feedback concerning our data. More feedback is discussed in Part IV, a

section devoted to the reactions we received from our interviews with representatives from the ELCA, LC-MS, and WELS.

Part IV - Interviews

As mentioned in Part III, a main goal of this project was to receive feedback on the data we collected. So, in addition to the comment box at the end of our survey, we conducted three face-to-face interviews in order to receive feedback on the survey results. The goal of Part IV of this paper is to present the opinions that those interviews cultivated. We decided to interview one representative each from the ELCA, the LC-MS, and the WELS who we thought would have a solid grasp on the present conditions, trends, and overall direction of his particular synod. For confidentiality reasons, we will simply refer to the esteemed men whom we interviewed as “the ELCA representative,” “the LC-MS representative,” and “the WELS representative.”

In order to conduct these interviews so as to obtain quality feedback, we emailed each representative three documents days before the interview was conducted: Dr. Kersten’s 1971 survey results, our survey results, and a copy of the questions we would ask in the interview.¹⁷ All three interviews were very pleasant and insightful. They shed light on a number of the questions that arose in our minds based on the data collected in our survey. What follows is a summary of the opinions shared in those interviews.

¹⁷ The documents that the representatives received in advance of the interview can be seen in Appendix 2.

Comparing the two surveys

Because our survey was heavily based on Dr. Kersten's 1971 survey, a number of our interview questions dealt specifically with comparing his results to ours.¹⁸ We asked the interviewees to react to the results of both surveys for Lutheran pastors as a whole. The WELS representative was pleasantly surprised to see a jump in percentages for both the ELCA and the LC-MS:

I did not expect to see as much commitment in the ELCA to the verbal inspiration and the historicity of Adam and Eve. That's a very high figure for original sin, and the exclusivity of Christianity and the physical resurrection – those are remarkable numbers...The LC-MS, too, was pleasantly surprising, that you have that strong of a commitment to those cardinal teachings in the LC-MS.

Commenting specifically on the ELCA results for the question regarding verbal inspiration in our 2009 survey, the WELS representative stated:

Forty percent. I'm surprised it's even that high. That's not ELCA speak. That's not how they talk. So the fact that you have 40 percent – which is nearly half – that are willing to make that kind of commitment, that's surprising. I guess I would have expected your results to be closer to the ten percent in the 1971 survey.

The LC-MS representative shared similar thoughts. As a Biblically conservative person himself, he seemed to find relief that our 2009 survey showed an increase in these percentages among Lutheran pastors as a whole, his own synod in particular:

The results were surprising. I guess the results of the LC-MS are what I've been hoping for and thinking was likely based on the Seminary training people have gotten for the last twenty years. But, I was surprised for the ELCA, that even they showed dramatic increases for the numbers of people who are honoring God's Word as we do. Especially in light of some of their recent decisions. It strikes me as strange. There's a disconnect between what many people are saying in this survey and the direction the entire church body is moving.

¹⁸ The WELS representative was the only one of the three interviewees who had previous knowledge of Dr. Kersten's 1971 survey. Both the ELCA and LC-MS representatives were observing it for the first time.

When asked the same question, the ELCA representative did not seem too interested in the results of either survey. Instead, he asserted that both surveys really produced inconclusive results because most of the survey questions were prone to misunderstandings. In fact, he was of the opinion that the main reason why the ELCA showed such vast differences in both surveys was because of these terminological misunderstandings: “You could have two people who essentially believe the same thing. One may read one of these questions and agree with it, another may read the same question and disagree with it. It’s very hard to communicate something in a way that all will be able to agree with it.”

This response did not come as too much of a surprise to us. Many of the ELCA pastors who responded to our survey made similar comments regarding the clarity of the questions. However, in contrast to the ELCA representative’s assertion that the unclear terminology was the *main* reason for disagreements in the ELCA, the WELS and LC-MS representatives felt the wording of our questions was very clear and very easy to understand. As we encouraged the ELCA representative to flesh out his supposition further, a deeper issue seemed to surface:

For example, you’ll notice that questions 3 and 5 of your survey produced significantly higher percentages in the ELCA than questions 1, 2, and 4. That’s because questions 3 and 5 deal with the fundamentals of Scripture – sin and grace. Those questions are less likely to be misunderstood, and I think that’s reflected in the higher rate of agreement. But questions 1 and 2, for example, I wouldn’t stake my life on them. These are not core teachings. We don’t necessarily emphasize these things, and our pastors are not as concerned about these things. As a result, the terminology regarding such topics is harder to pin down. So, that could explain some of those lower percentages.

This statement clearly revealed issues in the ELCA that run significantly deeper than mere terminological misunderstandings. These issues will be dealt with more extensively in Part V.

Widening the scope

As stated earlier, one of our main goals was to widen the scope of this survey to the entire nation. Because we were forced to limit our scope to the state of Wisconsin, we felt that it was very important to ask our interviewees if and how the results would change if this survey would be conducted nationwide. The WELS representative was confident that a nationwide survey would produce no change in the results for WELS pastors. His conjectures regarding the nationwide outlook of the ELCA and LC-MS were not as optimistic:

The good news is that there is still this much conservatism in the ELCA and LC-MS in Wisconsin. However, I think the Wisconsin contingent of Missouri Synod pastors tends to be a more conservative grouping, generally speaking. My guess is that were you to do this survey on one of the coasts or in Texas, you might get a strikingly different set of responses. Generally speaking, you can count on the fact that the rust belt, the Midwest, will be more conservative in their approach and outlook, and the coasts are going to be less so. You know, what's true of the American political scene is likely also to be true of the religious scene.

Both the LC-MS representative and the ELCA representative shared similar thoughts when asked about the possible results of a nationwide survey. The ELCA representative commented, "Certainly, the coasts will be different. The culture on the coasts is more liberal. And, often this translates into differing theological perspectives. A pastor on the coast may need to take more liberties in shepherding his congregation than a pastor in the Midwest." The liberal tendencies of the coasts also concerned the LC-MS representative: "At least in our circles, Wisconsin is considered to be fairly conservative. Whether you get the same percentages if you asked the LC-MS pastors on the coast is still a question." He also noted that this LC-MS tendency to be more liberal near the coasts shows itself extensively with other Scriptural doctrines as well:

Closed communion is another touchstone of orthodoxy. Whether they have open communion or closed communion kind of ties in with the question, 'Do you think the Bible is inspired?' As you get to the coasts, there is a wider latitude of

practice. Still, the majority of people follow synodical guidelines on that – they are practicing closed communion – but there is a noticeable difference between the central areas and the coasts.

Impact of the seminaries

It is only natural that a church body's teachings will reflect what is being taught at their seminaries. Therefore, our next question was geared toward seminary training. We asked each representative if he thought the survey results for his particular synod were indicative of what was being taught at the seminaries. The WELS representative certainly ascertained that the consistency shown among WELS pastors in the survey was a reflection of the consistent Scriptural teachings of the WELS seminary:

These results don't surprise me at all. I think there is a high level of commitment to the truth of God's Word. Every survey that I have ever seen of both WELS pastors and WELS lay people, again and again, one of the things they appreciate the most about the Seminary is the high commitment to God's Word and speaking God's Word and letting God's Word reign supreme. So, it doesn't surprise me to see these results because it's something that's reflected in our curriculum, in our approach to the Bible in every classroom, it's one of the key issues that we talk about in hermeneutics. So, from stem to stern, this is what we talk about at the Seminary. You'd probably have to be a potted plant to graduate from the Seminary and not be able to answer these questions.

The LC-MS representative didn't quite match the confidence level of the WELS representative, but he was still cautiously hopeful that the higher LC-MS percentages in our 2009 survey were a reflection of a more consistently conservative approach at the LC-MS seminaries. His restrained confidence stemmed from the changes that were made in the 1970s with regard to the dismissal of LC-MS professors who held a low view of Scripture. He states:

Even when I attended the LC-MS seminaries in the 80s, we were hearing from our professors all about the split that had taken place in the 70s and our professors were uniformly on the side of those who said our church as a whole made a good decision in getting rid of some of the poor professors we had before – poor in the sense of their understanding of biblical authority. So, all the training I received was on that side that would move us in this more conservative direction, and the

professors were saying that as the older ones who had previous training retire, our church should turn more and more in that direction. There have been times when I thought that I could see some evidence of that and other times the church has made choices that I thought maybe didn't show that progression. So I had the hope, but not the solid numbers to back up the teaching that I had received and I know continues at our seminaries. It pleases me to see the improvement in your survey results.

He also believes that this trend towards conservatism is true at both LC-MS seminaries: "After the split, both seminaries were teaching orthodox teachings concerning Scripture. So, anytime after the 70s you shouldn't find pastors going to one seminary saying the Bible is inspired and pastors going to another seminary saying it's simply a product of human imagination."

The ELCA representative's response regarding the correlation between the survey results and ELCA seminary training really reflected two truths. First of all, he openly stated that differences would certainly be found between one ELCA seminary and another, even differences within individual ELCA seminaries. Secondly, these differences did not present too much of a concern for him because he did not think seminary training necessarily shaped the theology of the pastors in the ELCA. He asserted:

There certainly is some diversity within our seminaries. I mean, we have eight. Usually, the larger the seminary, the bigger the discrepancies. But, most of the influence doesn't come from seminary training. I would say it has more to do with experience. If the overriding trend at a particular seminary is toward more liberal teaching, that may or may not affect the views of the student exposed to them. For example, if a student enters the seminary with a more conservative viewpoint, there's still a good chance that he will leave the seminary with that same viewpoint, even if the overriding trend at that seminary is more liberal in nature. Then again, maybe he won't. Maybe the seminary will shape him. Then, maybe he'll be reshaped once he's out in the field. The point is, there are many factors that go into shaping a person's theological viewpoints.

What does the future hold?

Our final question invited the interviewees to comment on the direction they felt their synods were heading in the years ahead. We asked them what kind of results they would expect

in their particular synod if a survey similar to ours was done in another forty years. The ELCA representative did not anticipate much change. Again, he pointed to misunderstood terminology: “I think that no matter when a survey like this is done, it will be difficult to word questions in a way that can be generally agreed upon. So, I would anticipate the same issues if this survey were done at a later date.”

The response of the LC-MS representative was thoughtful and well-stated. The LC-MS representative responded with a cautious optimism. He still voiced concerns over doctrines that may be leading his synod in the wrong direction:

I know that we take these concerns seriously and have been working at improvement ever since the split came about, whether we’ve been working as vigorously and effectively as we could have been is something that people are widely in disagreement about. But, I think your survey results show that whatever we are doing is on the right track, and I don’t see anything from an institutional level that would take us off that track. I can see things that might be dangerous. For example, if you’re more open in your fellowship principles, does that allow more leaven in a bad sense to enter into the church? What about certain worship styles? If you use more contemporary worship, are you introducing more subtly through the backdoor some doctrines that might conflict with these hard and fast, yes and no, types of doctrines? We are discussing such things. There is nothing pushing in the wrong direction on an institutional level, but whether we will suffer for not carefully guarding against some intrusions is something that I cannot predict.

Yet, even amid these concerns, he finds reason to be hopeful. His hope is founded on the power of God’s Word:

I was pleased to see the improvement. It’s something I have been hoping for and didn’t dare to hope we had made it this far – at least for those who responded in this area of the country...it revives my faith a bit in the power of God’s Word. It’s always nice to be on the side of God’s Word rather than fighting against it. Sometimes we get that flipped around. We think that those who are fighting against it have all the power on their side and we get in a defensive position. But, if you keep repeating the Word of God to people as carefully and helpfully as you can, that power has got to work some good fruit.

The WELS representative's response was equally thoughtful. He answered with confidence. Yet, he was rightfully cautious not to say too much. He concluded:

I think I'm going to refuse to answer that question, with an explanation. If I say, 'Yes, pastors in the WELS will respond the same way in forty years,' then I pretend to know the future. And I think I would be indulging myself in a theology of glory. If I said, 'No,' I would be giving in to the postmodern glooms and act as if I had some secret knowledge, that somehow these commitments are being eaten away either at our seminary or in our synod, and I don't have such secret knowledge. And I don't have any thoughts that that's going to happen. What I do believe is that it can happen to anybody. I would never have believed, given the kind of church body that the LC-MS was, that the sad state of affairs that we see happening now in the LC-MS would have ever come to pass. I think if you had talked in the 1930s about a future Missouri Synod that would look the way it does now, people in the Wisconsin Synod would have laughed at you and said, 'Such a thing will never happen.' And I think probably most of the people in the Missouri Synod would have said the same thing. It doesn't take much, it just takes a willingness of certain crucial key leaders to begin to soften, to change the whole dynamic of a synod over time. So, what that lesson of the LC-MS teaches me is that we should never rest on our laurels. We should never look at this as a given. I believe that with the increase of wickedness that we are going to see, we are moving to a society that is much more actively anti-Christian. And I think this is going to be a battleground for many years to come. So, I would just say that every generation is going to have to fight this battle. So, we should never rest on our laurels or think that it cannot happen to us, because it can.

Conclusion

These interviews certainly provided helpful reactions to our survey results. Part V will reflect on some of the conclusions we have drawn from all of the data found in Parts II, III, and IV of this paper.

Part V – Conclusions

In Parts II, III, and IV of this paper, we have attempted to be as unbiased as possible by just presenting the facts regarding the information we have gathered in this specific area at this specific time in history. In Part V, we are presenting our conclusions based on the data gathered

in Part II, the comments from survey participants compiled in Part III, and the interviews referenced in Part IV. As we document our conclusions, we will consider each church body individually.

ELCA

As we evaluated all of the information in front of us, it became increasingly clear that the pastors in the ELCA have a generally different spirit about them when it comes to their view of the Scriptures. They simply do not view the Scriptures as highly and as sacredly as pastors from the other participating Lutheran church bodies do. The survey's numerical data backs this conclusion. In the two survey questions that dealt with Biblical inspiration, inerrancy, and historical accuracy, significantly more than half of the responding pastors from the ELCA disagreed. The ELCA representative whom we interviewed expressed that many may have disagreed with the statements because of the lack of clarity with which they were worded. However, the fact that the ELCA pastors struggled significantly more than the other pastors with the wording of these two survey questions made it seem that the ELCA's issues went deeper than a mere misunderstanding of terminology. As we pursued this question further with the ELCA interviewee, the crux of the issue arose. Such issues are simply not seen as important in their church body. According to the interviewee, inspiration, inerrancy, and historical accuracy were "not core teachings," "not something we stress a lot," and not teachings "that I'd stake my life on." Certainly, such comments reflect a low view of Scripture. Because such things are not even thought of as an issue in the ELCA, it follows very logically that our survey displayed so many inconsistencies within the ELCA on these topics. It also follows that such a large amount of their pastors made similar comments regarding the "biased" and "unclear" wording of our

survey questions.

A second conclusion that we drew regarding the ELCA pastors is that they do not express too much concern over their differences. Most likely, this stems from the aforementioned low view of Scripture. If the Scriptures are not seen as authoritative, there is no reason to stand on strict confessions defending the truths that those Scriptures proclaim. In fact, an overarching trait that showed itself among all ELCA participants was a spirit of vagueness. We found much unwillingness from ELCA pastors to state biblical truths dogmatically. There was an overall reluctance to confess their beliefs in a clear manner. The ELCA representative whom we interviewed often talked around the issues we wanted to discuss. It became quickly evident that the practice of pinning down their beliefs in such a way so that those beliefs can be communicated clearly and without misunderstanding is not a skill that is often put into practice nor encouraged in the ELCA. Ultimately, they stand for nothing, seeming to almost take pride in their vagueness. It follows that confronting false doctrine and exercising church discipline are also not pressing issues within their synod.

Based on these conclusions, there does not seem to be much hope that issues within the ELCA can improve. Our prayer is that those in the ELCA will begin to regard the Scriptures with the authority they deserve and that they will start to take pride in defending the truths those Scriptures proclaim. However, the impression our research left on us indicates that the opposite is much more likely.

LC-MS

We were pleasantly surprised with the results we obtained from the pastors in the LC-MS. Judging from Kersten's survey conducted only ten years after the WELS break with LC-

MS, it seemed as though the level of conservatism among pastors in the LC-MS was dwindling, to say the least. We suspected that the responses in our survey would show even more liberal tendencies than the one done nearly forty years earlier. Yet, with over a 45% response rate, the pastors in the LC-MS demonstrated near congruency in their answers and a compliance with the truths of Scripture.

What accounts for this apparent upswing in conservatism? There are a number of possibilities we could point to. The first deals with the geographic area that we surveyed. Of the three representatives we interviewed, all of them thought we would probably find a more liberal stronghold on the coasts. It is also possible that only the conservative pastors of the LC-MS would tend to fill out a survey such as this one. Another possibility with a survey of this type is that the responder might be inclined to choose the answer that he felt we wanted to receive. Furthermore, the responder could have answered according to what his church body stood for rather than what he himself stood for.

Any or all of these possibilities could have played a factor in our results. The representative from the LC-MS took the results of our survey to show that there was indeed an upswing in conservatism among his church body. This is something he had been hoping to see happen in the LC-MS. Still, he too pointed out that there are some differences among the pastors he has talked to, but these differences most likely would not show up in the basic questions that we asked. Perhaps, these differences would present themselves if we conducted another survey and asked some questions concerning the Lord's Supper, fellowship, or worship style.

Even sifting through the comments made by the LC-MS pastors, we sensed a bit of a similar spirit that we found in the ELCA. Some of the LC-MS pastors believed that these black and white questions required more than a simple "yes" or "no" answer. One pastor in his

comment seemed to take issue with the story of Adam and Eve being historically accurate. He hinted that this might be a story, not talking about Adam and Eve, but about us. These are all trends that we saw in our comments from ELCA pastors. Sadly, we know that a little yeast of false doctrine soon works through the whole batch of dough, making it likely that this movement toward liberalism will continue to grow in the LC-MS unless more doctrinal discipline is administered. When false doctrine is known and present in a church body, more has to be done than just recognizing it. The false teachers need to be removed so that the pure gospel can be sustained.

Yet, from Kersten's survey to ours, we cannot dismiss an apparent upswing in conservatism. Is it because a large number of the more liberal professors and pastors in the LC-MS are retiring – as the LC-MS representative stated? This very well could be the case. We have discussed a few of the reasons that our results could be skewed, hence making it only appear that the LC-MS is having a turnaround in regard to biblical doctrine. Nevertheless, taking the facts as they stand, we, with the LC-MS representative, hope for an upswing in conservatism in the LC-MS. We know that false doctrine does exist in the LC-MS, yet it seems that there are still those in the church body willing to fight for the truth, a willingness that was not evident in the ELCA. We pray that God's Word convicts the false teachers of their errors and encourages those who teach the truth to stand for it, fight for it, and never stray from it.

CLC

We did not receive any comments from CLC pastors who participated in our survey. We also did not conduct an interview with a CLC representative. With only three responses from

this relatively small church body, we do not have enough gathered information to make any sweeping conclusions about the beliefs of the pastors in this church body.

ELS

We did not receive any comments from ELS pastors who participated in our survey. We also did not conduct an interview with an ELS representative. Because the ELS is in fellowship with the WELS, we see no reason to surmise that the conclusions following about the WELS could not also apply to this church body.

WELS

In the conclusions we drew regarding pastors in the LC-MS, we stated a number of possible reasons why their church body might appear more conservative than it actually is. One may claim that the same possibilities (geographic area, only conservative pastors returned surveys, etc.) need to be considered regarding the biblically conservative results we found among WELS pastors.

However, the factors that raised doubts about the LC-MS results are not present among WELS pastors. First of all, the data we collected in our survey among WELS pastors shows absolute consistency to the data collected in 1971. Secondly, the responses we garnered through the comments and through the interview with the WELS representative did not at all hint at any underlining differences within the church body. Rather, pastors in the WELS showed complete unity in the Scriptures and even a great sense of pride in keeping the truths of Scripture pure. The message they rallied around was clear: by grace alone, by faith alone, by Scripture alone.

In light of these observations, we believe that the WELS can approach the future with a humble confidence. This confidence stems from our pastors' firm foundation in the Scriptures. Yet, we recognize that the WELS is part of the church militant. We are not immune to the deceptions of the devil. Thus, in the coming years, it will be of the utmost importance for the WELS to continue to stand on Scripture and Scripture alone.

Appendix 1 – Cover Letter

Subject Line: Church History Project...

Dear Pastor,

We are conducting a short survey of Lutheran pastors in Wisconsin for a church history project at Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary. This survey is completely anonymous and will take less than 1 minute to complete. Simply click on the following link to access the survey – (zoomerang.com).

Thanks for your help! God's blessings on your day!

Fred Berger

Brett Krause

Appendix 2 – Interview Documents

1971 Survey

In 1971, Dr. Lawrence Kersten (who at that time belonged to the Lutheran Church - Missouri Synod) was Assistant Professor of Sociology at Eastern Michigan University. He did a study in the three-county area of metropolitan Detroit to determine the impact of religion on the attitudes and values of the Lutherans in that area. He also wanted to see if Biblical, traditional Lutheran beliefs remained viable in 20th Century America. The results were published in a book called, “The Lutheran Ethic,” in 1971 by Wayne State University Press.

Kersten surveyed a random sample of the congregational members of the different Lutheran groups, parish pastors of the different groups (230 parish pastors completed questionnaires), and students from the four groups. Below is listed a sample of the data collected from the pastors.

The synods involved were the Lutheran Church in America (LCA), the American Lutheran Church (ALC), the Lutheran Church - Missouri Synod (LC-MS), and the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod (WELS). **The number after each statement represents the percent of pastors who agreed with the statement.**

	<u>LCA*</u>	<u>ALC*</u>	<u>LC-MS</u>	<u>WELS</u>
1. The Bible is God’s Word and all it says is true.	10%	19%	74%	100%
2. The Bible contains some human error.	76%	74%	18%	0%
3. The account of Adam and Eve falling into sinfulness is simply a story which did not take place in reality.	83%	72%	20%	0%
4. A child is sinful at birth.	67%	74%	96%	100%
5. Only those who believe in Jesus as their Savior can go to heaven.	43%	52%	84%	100%

* On January 1, 1988, the LCA and ALC merged (along with a third group) to form “The Evangelical Lutheran Church in America.” (ELCA)

2009 Survey

We decided for our Senior Church History project to conduct a survey similar to Dr. Kersten's 1971 survey (above). Our goal was to see if Dr. Kersten's data still properly represented Lutheran pastors in 2009. Rather than conducting the survey in the Detroit area, we thought it would be interesting to conduct the survey among all Lutheran pastors in the United States. Due to a lack of resources, we needed to narrow our scope to Lutheran pastors in five different denominations in the state of Wisconsin.

The synods involved were the Evangelical Lutheran Church of America (ELCA), the Lutheran Church – Missouri Synod (LC-MS), the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod (WELS), the Evangelical Lutheran Synod (ELS), and the Church of the Lutheran Confession (CLC).

We sent our survey via Zoomerang (an online survey software tool) to 574 ELCA pastors, 510 LC-MS pastors, 596 WELS pastors, 25 ELS pastors, and 5 CLC pastors. We received partially or fully completed surveys from 124 ELCA pastors, 233 LC-MS pastors, 344 WELS pastors, 11 ELS pastors, and 3 CLC pastors.

Below are the results of our survey. **The number after each statement represents the percent of pastors who agreed with the statement.**

	<u>ELCA</u>	<u>LC-MS</u>	<u>WELS</u>	<u>ELS</u>	<u>CLC</u>
1. The Bible is God's verbally inspired Word and it contains no errors.	40.5%	97.8%	100%	100%	100%
2. The account of Adam and Eve falling into sinfulness is historically accurate.	36.8%	98.2%	100%	100%	100%
3. A child is sinful at conception.	87.5%	100%	100%	100%	100%
4. Only those who believe in Jesus as their Savior will go to heaven.	60%	99.6%	100%	100%	100%
5. The resurrection of Jesus Christ was a bodily, physical resurrection.	96.2%	100%	100%	100%	100%

Interview Questions

Can you tell us a little bit about your background?

Before this interview, were you familiar with Dr. Kersten's 1971 survey?

As you compare Dr. Kersten's survey to our survey, are the results what you would expect for Lutheran pastors as a whole? For the pastors in the ELCA/LC-MS/WELS?

If we would have had the resources to conduct this survey nationwide, do you think the results from ELCA/LC-MS/WELS pastors would be the same or different? Why?

Do you think the survey results are indicative of what is being taught at the ELCA/LC-MS/WELS Seminary?

If a survey similar to Dr. Kersten's and ours is done in another 40 years, what kind of results would you predict for the ELCA/LC-MS/WELS?

Appendix 3 – Acknowledgments

During the course of this project, we received assistance and advice from a number of individuals. It is only appropriate that these individuals receive acknowledgement for their help.

*We thank WLS professor John Brenner for his guidance in editing our survey questions so that they would be least likely to be misunderstood.

*We thank WLS professor John Hartwig for his advice regarding survey procedures.

*We thank WLS professor Richard Gurgel for his advice regarding the interview process.

*We thank WLS president Paul Wendland for allowing us to have access to the WLS *Zoomerang* account.

*We thank WLS professor James Korthals for his help in managing the *Zoomerang* account.

*We thank Lori Guse for compiling an email distribution list for the WELS pastors in Wisconsin.

*We thank Sarah Malchow for her help in setting up our *Zoomerang* account, for updating us on results as the data came in, and for printing off the final results.

*We thank the three esteemed representatives from the ELCA, LC-MS, and WELS who sacrificed a part of their busy schedules to allow us to interview them.

*We thank WLS student Ian Welch for allowing us to use his audio recorder during the interviews.

*We thank life-long friends Jeff Potratz and Conrad Warnke for participating in preliminary survey tests so that we could work out any problems that might have arisen before we launched our official survey.